



Update on Suisun Marsh Plan

June 2006

Charter

Group



Now is a colorful time to visit Suisun Marsh

Although our long, late winter diminished wildflower displays in many areas of the state, Suisun Marsh is presenting remarkable displays of beautiful colors. As the nearby hills turn brown, the Marsh retains much of its green tint and some species are developing lovely colors. From highways that ring Suisun Marsh travelers can see some of this fascinating water wonderland.



However, a leisurely drive down Grizzly Island Road reveals much more of the stunning beauty of Suisun Marsh. Visitors can stop at Rush Ranch, step back in time to pioneer days, and walk from dry hills to damp marshlands in just a few steps. On down the road is Grizzly Island Wildlife Management Area. Still farther one is deep into the tidal marshes and water-land interactions. The trip can be made in an hour. Or visitors can spend an entire day walking and watching, yet feel that they are still just beginning to discover the many aspects of Suisun Marsh's beauty!



Next steps for Marsh plan to be discussed at Charter Group meeting



The Charter Group of seven key agencies and interests overseeing the Habitat Management, Preservation and Restoration Plan for Suisun Marsh meets monthly. All agencies that have any role in the Marsh will meet again on June 22 for a comprehensive overview of progress to date and the next steps. The substantial amount of planning that has gone into the process so far has put the project at the point where it is now developing the required Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement/Report.

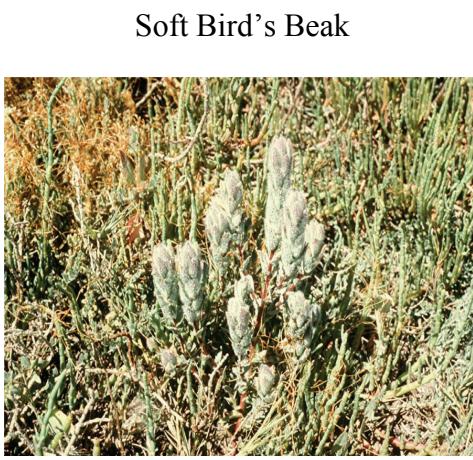


Marsh harbors rare plants proposed for critical habitat



The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed critical habitat for Suisun thistle and soft bird's-beak, two rare plants whose remaining home is primarily in the Suisun Marsh. Remaining populations occur in higher tidal marshes that drain into tidal sloughs.

Suisun thistle is a perennial on erect stems up to 7 feet tall with deep to pale rose-purple colored flower heads. Soft bird's-beak is a root hemi-parasitic annual herb in the snapdragon family, up to 16 inches tall with gray-green foliage, often tinged deep red to purple. It has inconspicuous spike-shaped clusters of white or yellowish-white flowers.



Soft Bird's Beak

In Suisun Marsh three proposed critical habitat units are a 525-acre tract known as Hill Slough Marsh, 1,181 acres of Rush Ranch/ Grizzly Island Wildlife Area, and a 413-acre Peytonia Slough Marsh unit. All of the Suisun Marsh proposed critical habitat units are owned by the State, public agencies or preservation land trusts. More information can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/sacramento/>. A comment period will reopen soon, when the draft economic analysis is released.

Photo Credit: Brenda Grewell, USDA



Suisun Thistle

Photo Credit: Brenda Grewell, USDA

Continued on page 2



Update on Suisun Marsh Plan

June 2006 Page 2

The Suisun Marsh Plan is: Local, state and federal agencies that, through the CALFED Bay-Delta Program, help improve the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary are partnering on a plan to protect and enhance wildlife values and water quality in Suisun Marsh, the largest brackish wetland in the western United States. Members of the partnership, known as the Suisun Marsh Charter Group, are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries), the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the California Department of Fish and Game, the California Department of Water Resources, and the California Bay-Delta Authority. The partnership also includes the Suisun Resource Conservation District, which represents the interests of private landowners. The Charter Group works with other participating agencies, including the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in developing this plan.

Suisun Marsh issues presented at major Delta science program

Various aspects of the Suisun Marsh recovery effort were covered in four presentations made and seven posters displayed at the Interagency Ecological Program conference in March. The program brought together dozens of scientists working on various aspects of the Bay-Delta challenge. Reflecting the importance of Suisun Marsh in the recovery effort was the large number of papers and posters reporting on the Marsh. Links to the materials are at <http://www.delta.dfg.ca.gov/suisunmarsh/charter/iep2006.asp>.

Typical was the presentation on tidal wetlands recovery presented by Carl Wilcox of the California Department of Fish and Game. He reviewed several interesting projects that are moving forward, including the Hill Slough project, which begins south of Highway 12, near Grizzly Island Road. It will extend south to tidal water at Hill Slough, recreating a native species wildlife area within sight of a rapidly growing urban area.

The plan provides a vehicle to restore tidal marsh in the broader context of balancing habitat needs of species, Wilcox explained. But the challenges are significant, including subsidence, salinity, low sediment loads in the waters and the need to protect local infrastructure and neighbors of restoration projects.



Update on Suisun Marsh Plan
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Sacramento Fish & Wildlife Office
2800 Cottage Way, Room W-2605
Sacramento, CA 95825-1846